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ABSTRACT

While there are powerful arguments in favor of using authentic, essentially ephemeral materials in second language learning, there may also be a significant need for fixed support in addition. Recent research in Ireland suggests a student-perceived need for instruction in grammar that, in combination with authentic materials and other kinds of information about the language, can substantially advance language learning. The proposed solution is a text exploitation kit, available to teachers and learners, with detailed, step-by-step instructions for creating didactic materials from authentic texts. Such a manual would have three sections: the first non-language-specific, dealing with learning in general and language learning in particular and offering a number of strategies for promoting more effective learning; the second language-specific and containing reference material relating to the language system in question and its principal sociocultural contexts of usage; and the third language-specific but constructed of a battery of text-exploitation "recipes" designed to mediate between the manual's first and second sections and authentic texts. The manual could be in print form or use computer technology. (MSE)

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Authentic materials and the role of fixed support in language teaching: towards a manual for language learners

D. G. Little and D. M. Singleton

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AUTHENTIC MATERIALS AND THE ROLE OF FIXED SUPPORT IN LANGUAGE TEACHING: TOWARDS A MANUAL FOR LANGUAGE LEARNERS[1]

by

D. G. Little and D. M. Singleton

0 INTRODUCTION

In recent years there has been a rapid and widespread increase in the use of "authentic texts" in second language learning.[2] The quotation marks are necessary because of the special sense that language teachers have come to attach to the word "authentic". When they use it to describe a text, they usually mean to signal not only that the text in question was produced for some non-pedagogical purpose, but that it is non-literary, often journalistic and of ephemeral interest and value.[3] Logically "authentic texts" can exist in any medium - print, audio, video, teletext, etc. As far as language teaching materials are concerned, "authentic text" mostly means "extract from a newspaper or magazine".

The rise of the "authentic text" is closely associated with the development of communicative approaches to language teaching. Originally, perhaps, the chief concern was to provide learners with input materials that were neither part of the literary culture attached to the language in question, nor had been invented in order to illustrate the usage of a particular linguistic form, but reflected some of the daily concerns of native speakers of the target language. Experience suggests that learners find such materials more interesting than traditional course books and thus more motivating.

There are two further powerful arguments for giving "authentic texts" a central role in language teaching programmes. First, research into first and second language acquisition and language processing suggests that "authentic texts" will more effectively foster and sustain unconscious acquisition processes than invented texts. In particular, learners are likely to benefit from the

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natural level of redundancy present in "authentic texts"; and if the texts they are required to come to terms with in their target language belong to a range of text types they are familiar with in their first language, they will be able to bring a formidable array of world knowledge to bear on the learning process (for a substantiation of this position, see Devitt 1986). Secondly, if it is appropriately organized, work on "authentic texts" has the capacity to promote language learners to the status of language users at the very point where the learning process is at its most intense. Thus in principle "authentic texts" provide an ideal focus for the development of learner autonomy. In recent years this has come to be seen as one of the chief concerns of language teachers (see e.g. Holec 1988): logically only those who attain a significant degree of autonomy as language learners are likely to become independent, adventurous and efficient language users.

Few language course books published in the last ten years are without their share of "authentic texts". But the ephemeral nature of such texts means that the books are out of date before they are published. It was this consideration that led to the establishment of *Authentik*, first as a research project of the Department of Teacher Education, Trinity College, Dublin, and latterly as one of the College's campus companies. *Authentik* is the cover name for newspapers and audio cassettes that are compiled from press and radio sources in French, German and Spanish and published seven times during the school year. In 1986-7 *Authentik* was used by over 60% of Irish post-primary schools, about 50% of independent schools in the United Kingdom, and about 15% of maintained (Local Education Authority) schools in the United Kingdom. In February 1988 circulation figures were: French - 31,215 newspapers and 937 cassettes; German - 8,374 newspapers and 593 cassettes; Spanish - 5,299 newspapers and 428 cassettes.

At present most teachers use *Authentik* to supplement a traditional language course book. However, this is expensive and introduces organizational complications. Thus the question arises, if learners were to receive most of their target language input from essentially ephemeral authentic materials, would such materials suffice on their own, or would learners want and need some kind of fixed support in addition to the authentic materials?

This paper is an attempt to answer that question; it turns out to be a first step towards developing new kinds of fixed support for second language learners. We begin by acknowledging that explanations of how the target system functions have only limited usefulness when placed at the centre of language teaching methodology, and we illustrate this by reference to three research projects recently carried out in Ireland. We go on, however, to cite

evidence from the same research projects that learners nevertheless perceive a need for "grammar", by which they seem to mean any kind of information about the target language, and to argue that this has to do with the reassurance derivable from the presence of readily available sources of such information. We further argue that the interaction of input in the form of information of this kind with other varieties of input can yield substantive benefits as far as the development of the learner's target language competence is concerned, and that the availability of accessible sources of such information is a necessary prerequisite for the autonomizing of the language learner. We then suggest that learner autonomy and the efficiency of the learning process may be enhanced by also putting at the disposal of learners types of information which have not traditionally come their way, except perhaps via scattered hints - on the one hand, information about pragmatic and sociolinguistic aspects of the target language, and on the other, information about the very nature of learning and using a second language. Finally, we discuss the insight from memory research that in order for verbal input to bear fruit in terms of actual intake, it needs to be genuinely engaged and acted upon by the learner; and we argue that, realistically, teachers and learners require a constantly accessible compendium of suggestions as to how to initiate and sustain a programme of input exploitation. Our conclusion briefly suggests the form that might be taken by the kind of fixed support we are working towards.

1 THE EXPLICIT TEACHING OF GRAMMAR: FINDINGS OF SOME RECENT RESEARCH PROJECTS IN IRELAND

In the Republic of Ireland Irish is taught at primary level; Irish, French, German, Spanish and Italian are taught at post-primary level; and Irish, French, German, Spanish, Italian and Russian are taught at tertiary level. The continental European languages of the curriculum are taught for the most part by non-native speakers in an environment which is (of course) at a considerable remove from the target language community. For the majority of the school population much the same could be said with regard to Irish. Ó Murchú (1984) estimates that Irish is the first language of about 3% of the population. Irish-medium schools provide an immersion environment in the Gaeltacht (Irish-speaking areas) and also in some English-speaking areas. But such arrangements affect only a tiny minority of the school population. The majority of children encounter Irish throughout their school careers as a foreign language, and except when they or their families choose otherwise, the Irish in their environment is limited to minimal manifestations of a first official language.

The officially sanctioned programme for primary level Irish, the so-

called *Nuachúrsaí* (new courses), is based on a structural syllabus drawing on the results of a quantitative study of Irish similar, for example, to the study which led to the establishment of *le français fondamental* (see, e.g., Ó Domhnalláin 1967, 1977). It has the appearance of audio-visual courses of the classic kind. However, at no stage has the teaching of Irish at this (or any other level) been characterized by an absence of explicit grammatical instruction. The official Department of Education handbook is somewhat ambivalent on the question of grammar teaching ([An Roinn Oideachais] 1971, pp.55-77), but certainly does not proscribe it. In practice, the exposition of discrete grammar points and even the rote learning of paradigms have continued to loom large. What most primary level learners of Irish experience, therefore, is a structurally graded syllabus realized via a combination of audio-visual pedagogy and traditional grammatical instruction.

Data collected by the first research project that we are going to refer to (Harris 1984) call into question the effectiveness of the explicit treatment of grammar as the chief tool of the language teacher. There is of course nothing new about this. The Reform Movement of the 1880s and 1890s, for example, proposed that the explicit treatment of grammar points should be displaced from its hitherto central position and be seen instead as no more than an aid to natural acquisition processes (Christopherson 1973, p.16); and much of what exponents of the communicative approach have been saying in recent years about the explicit teaching of grammar can be reduced to the same terms.

Harris's project set out to analyse learners' achievement in spoken Irish in primary schools by conducting large-scale surveys of the Irish language competence of pupils at second, fourth and sixth grade (average ages: 7+, 9+ and 11+ respectively). The bulk of his data came from predominantly English-medium schools in predominantly English-speaking areas, although some comparative data were collected from schools in the Gaeltacht and from Irish-medium schools in English-speaking areas. Harris's instruments were a range of criterion-referenced language tests designed to elicit data on whether or not subjects had mastered or progressed towards the objectives he identified as implicit for their class level in the officially sanctioned school programme. He distinguished between grammar-related objectives, i.e. those having to do with the understanding and control of morphology and syntax, and non-grammar-related objectives, e.g. sound discrimination, pronunciation, and fluency of oral description.

Harris defined three levels of achievement in relation to each objective - "mastery" (75% or more of the maximum possible test score), "at least minimal progress" (40% or more of the maximum possible test score), and

"failure to make even minimum progress" (less than 40% of the maximum possible testscore). Notwithstanding the structural grading of the syllabus, the drills of the officially sanctioned programme of instruction, and the explicit grammatical instruction that characterizes most classroom practice, "mastery" and "minimal progress" were on average markedly less often exhibited in respect of the grammar-related objectives than in respect of the non-grammar related objectives (see Singleton and Little 1986, Table 8). These results must cast doubt on any very strong claim with regard to grammar teaching. However, there is some further evidence from Harris's study to suggest that real progress in mastering the target system depends on factors other than grammatical instruction.

In the 2nd and 4th grade surveys subjects were asked about languages used at home. As one might expect, subjects who reported some use of Irish at home performed overall much better in Irish than subjects reporting no home use of Irish. But what is particularly interesting is that the difference between the performance of the two groups is very much more marked in respect of the grammar-related objectives than in respect of the non-grammar-related objectives (see Singleton and Little 1986, Tables 9 & 10). The inescapable inference is that the major factor in developing control of the target system is the degree to which the target language is used as a medium of communication rather than the explicit teaching of components of the system.

This inference is strongly supported by what emerged from a comparison of data from English-medium schools with data from non-Gaeltacht Irish-medium schools collected in the course of the 2nd and 4th grade surveys (see Singleton and Little 1986, Tables 11 & 12). Predictably the general performance in Irish of pupils from schools where the predominant language of instruction and administration was Irish was dramatically better than that of pupils from predominantly English-medium schools. But once more the difference between the two groups was far greater in regard to grammar-related objectives than in regard to non-grammar-related objectives. Again, what seems to make the difference in relation to grammatical accuracy is the degree to which the language is used as a medium of communication.

If Harris's data imply that the explicit teaching of discrete grammatical features and paradigms is no guarantee of success in mastering the target system, one of the findings of the second research project to which we shall refer was that learners had no very happy memories of such an approach to the teaching of grammar. Devitt et al. (1982-3) studied a group of 171 adults who had volunteered to have their progress monitored while following the first level

of *Anois is Arís*, a broadcast (television and radio) Irish course, in the autumn and winter of 1981-2. Before the beginning of the course the group was asked to fill in a questionnaire eliciting data on social and educational background, "language history", attitudes to Irish, and expectations of the course. The questionnaire included the following four open questions:

(i) What did you enjoy most about learning Irish?
(ii) What did you enjoy least about learning Irish?
(iii) What did you enjoy most about learning this language/these languages [other than Irish]?
(iv) What did you enjoy least about learning this language/these languages [other than Irish]?

Note that, on the face of it, these subjects were exceptionally well-disposed both towards Irish and towards language learning generally. They had not only spontaneously decided to follow a broadcast language course in Irish, but were also interested enough in their past and prospective language learning experience to volunteer to report on it in some detail. The responses elicited by these questions show that "grammar" had not been a favoured component of subjects' language learning diet (for a fuller account than the one that follows, see Devitt et al. 1982-3, Tables 37, 40, 45, 48 and related discussion; also Singleton and Little 1986, Tables 2-5 and related discussion).

Whereas not a single subject specifically mentioned "grammar" as an aspect of language learning he/she had *most* enjoyed, in respect of both Irish and other languages "grammar" was the "*least* enjoyed" factor mentioned most frequently (by 41.0% of subjects in the case of Irish and by 44.4% of subjects in the case of other languages). Moreover, in respect of both Irish and other languages, the "*least* enjoyed" factor mentioned most frequently after "grammar" was "teaching approach" (15.9% in the case of Irish, 11.1% in the case of other languages), which in the majority of cases is likely to have been strongly oriented to the explicit teaching of grammar.

However, although many participants in this project had unhappy memories of the explicit teaching of the grammar of Irish, some participants believed that "grammar" had an important role to play in helping them to achieve their target competence in Irish. In order to monitor participants' progress as they followed the broadcast Irish course, Devitt et al. devised a journal-questionnaire for each of the twenty units of the course. Each journal-questionnaire included the following three open questions:

(i) What did you find you learned well?
(ii) What did you find most difficult in this lesson?

(iii) What would you feel you need more help with or more practice on?

In one week grammatical content was the aspect of the unit reported most frequently as having been learned well (by 39.0% of participants); otherwise it was not a dominant feature of responses to question (i). As regards question (ii), "grammar" was the most frequently reported difficult feature in respect of four of the twenty units and every week figured as at least a minority preoccupation. As regards question (iii), and perhaps most tellingly, "grammar and/or orthography" was the dominant area in which participants felt they needed more help or practice, being more frequently mentioned than any other area in respect of eight units and jointly most frequently mentioned in respect of one further unit. (For a fuller account of these data, see Devitt et al. 1982-3, Tables 89-97 and related discussion.)

The pedagogical approach that dominates the teaching of Irish at primary level - audio-visual materials and exercises combined with explicit grammatical instruction - is probably also characteristic of a great many French, German, Spanish and Italian classrooms at second level in Ireland, or was at the time the data were collected. Certainly, this was the finding of the third research project that we shall refer to, Little and Grant's two year self-instructional programme in German for undergraduate students of Engineering Science (Little and Grant 1984 and 1986).

Two groups of participants were recruited, Group A (49 members) at the beginning of the first year of the project (October 1982) and Group B (39 members) at the beginning of the second year (October 1983). All members of each group were interviewed when first recruited in order to elicit data concerning their previous language learning experience, their perceptions of the learning task and their attitudes to it. The great majority of both groups remembered their previous language learning experience as having been dominated by grammatical instruction (Group A 87.7%; Group B 82.0%), written activities (Group A 71.4%; Group B 82.0%), and mechanical exercises (Group A 73.4%; Group B 87.2%).

Asked whether they liked the methods by which they had been taught languages, no one in Group A and only 10.2% of Group B responded positively in respect of grammatical instruction; only 4.0% of Group A and 10.2% of Group B responded positively in respect of written activities; and only 12.2% of Group A and 10.2% of Group B responded positively in respect of mechanical exercises. Asked whether they found these methods successful, no one in Group A and only 10.2% of Group B responded positively in respect of grammatical instruction; while only 2.0% of Group A and 10.2% of Group B

responded positively in respect of written activities. However, 83.7% of Group A and 51.3% of Group B responded positively in respect of mechanical exercises - which might be described as grammatical instruction at one remove.

Like Devitt et al.'s subjects, participants in Little and Grant's project retained a strong sense of the important role played by "grammar" in a successful language learning process. For example, *The BBC German Kit* (Sprankling 1979) was the basic learning resource provided; and participants who reported some difficulty with their learning tended to criticize the *Kit* for its lack of specific grammatical instruction. But more significant than this, the counselling service which provided Little and Grant with most of their data uncovered strong evidence of the extent to which persistent correction of grammatical error and an insistence on rote-learning can help to create psychological problems for the learner. The following extract from Little and Grant's report on their project speaks for itself:

> During the second term of the programme one participant who had taken German at Leaving Certificate visited the counsellor in order to express doubts about both the suitability of the *BBC German Kit* to his needs and his own ability to adapt to self-instructional learning. He appeared to be on the point of abandoning the programme. The chief source of his difficulties seemed to be irrational beliefs about both his own ability and the language learning process. Although he expressed great enthusiasm for language learning, he confessed that he had found it a boring process at school, where he had not been a particularly successful language learner. He believed that he was good at picking up languages in a natural setting, but doubted his capacity to organize a self-instructional learning programme and develop a pattern of regular learning. It became clear to the counsellor that he was setting himself unrealistic goals and became despondent when he failed to attain them with a minimum of effort.
>
> The negative image that this participant had formed of himself as a language learner constantly impeded his attempts to learn. He used evaluative adjectives like "wrong" and "hopeless" to describe his learning experiences and the language he produced. In discussion with the counsellor it emerged that these labels derived from the criteria which had been used in his German classroom to evaluate pupils' linguistic performance. He performed "badly" in his (or his former teacher's) terms if he failed to produce a complete sentence in response to a question, even though in most cases a native speaker would respond with no more than a word or two. During his first counselling session he

admitted that he found the oral/aural dimension of the *BBC German Kit* off-putting as his previous learning experience had been almost exclusively focussed on written forms of the language. From the beginning of the programme he found that he had considerable problems with the pronunciation of German, and he attempted to overcome this by constantly repeating and memorizing phrases and sentences from the early units of the *Kit*. Thus he spent a lot of time and energy learning by heart material which was already familiar to him and which was far too simple to be of enduring interest. At school learning by heart had proved an effective means of obtaining satisfactory marks, but in the context of self-instructional learning it produced boredom and a sense of failure. (Little and Grant 1986, pp.40ff.)

2 WHY LEARNERS WANT "GRAMMAR" AND WHY IT MAY HELP

We can hardly claim that the research findings we have been summarizing are conclusive. It is true that the three projects in question were all conducted within the same small, highly centralized and relatively conservative educational system. But each project was concerned with a different population, and in two of the three projects the population was self-selected and small. Nevertheless, the findings are strongly suggestive, especially as they coincide with research findings elsewhere, with the intuitions of many language teachers, and with a wealth of anecdotal evidence circulating in the language teaching profession.

Harris's data lend support to the widely-held view that what is most important in developing learners' control of the target system is the fostering of "meaningful interaction in the target language - natural communication - in which speakers are concerned not with the form of their utterances but with the messages they are conveying and understanding" (Krashen 1981b, p.1); while Little and Grant's case study can be related to the so-called Affective Filter Hypothesis, posited by Dulay and Burt (1977) and subsequently adopted by Krashen, which predicts that acquisition of the target system will be hindered if learners are "anxious, 'on the defensive' or not motivated" (Krashen 1981a, p.56).

Devitt et al.'s learners of Irish by television and radio had no very positive memories of "grammar" from their previous experience of learning either Irish or other languages; and although they had mostly been taught the languages they knew by methods which gave prominence to the explicit teaching of grammar, written activities and mechanical exercises, Little and Grant's

students of Engineering Science reported little enjoyment of these methods and gave little credit to grammar and written activities for whatever success they had achieved in language learning. It is almost as though both groups of subjects had been illuminated by a careful reading of Krashen's articles.

Clearly, the explicit teaching of grammar does not guarantee success; equally clearly, learners appear not to like the explicit teaching of grammar, which can make them anxious and seriously demotivate them. And yet ... "grammar" was a consistent preoccupation of at least a minority of Devitt et al.'s subjects as they reported week by week on their experience of the broadcast Irish course; Little and Grant's subjects tended to think that mechanical exercises (grammar drills) were an effective means of language learning; and when they expressed dissatisfaction with the *BBC German Kit*, Little and Grant's subjects tended to criticize its lack of explicit grammatical content. (In a personal communication Devitt reports that students following a would-be communicative course in Russian as part of their initial training as language teachers consistently make the same complaint.)

It is of course possible to dismiss language learners' sense that they need something they call "grammar" as no more than the undesirable effect of long conditioning: their langage teachers have insisted on the importance of "grammar", so perhaps it is important, regardless of such issues as enjoyment and motivation. But if we do dismiss learners' sense of a need for "grammar" in these terms, then we must also dismiss a similar sense that seems to be creating considerable unease among language teachers, especially those who have been disillusioned by their attempts to do without explicit grammatical instruction in the pursuit of communication and natural acquisition.

It seems to us that there are two reasons why learners are likely to want "grammar", one having to do with the fact that in a formal educational context a foreign language is a subject like any other - history, science, home economics or whatever -, the other having to do with the business of language learning and language processing.

On the one hand learners are conditioned to expect to have their school subjects defined and encompassed for them, usually in the form of a book. Language course books organized along structural lines are in some sense attempts to contextualize the target system and they usually present summaries of different aspects of the system in traditional paradigmatic form. But some at least of the more recent (would-be communicative) course books, do not seem to encompass as much of the target system as grammar-based books, which appear to make claims concerning completeness and generalizability. A grammar book, or the grammar section of a structurally organized course book,

contains what can be rote-learned; it contains a ready means of checking what has been learnt and determining whether it is right or wrong; in the terms of traditional language syllabus definition it *is* the syllabus and thus stands as a powerful abstraction of the learner's overall task.

On the other hand, learners apparently need to develop a means of more or less consciously filtering or monitoring their production of the target language. Particularly when they are planning discourse (cf. Ellis 1984), whether spoken or written, they need to be able to distance themselves from the product under preparation in order to decide whether or not it is emerging in the form most appropriate to the purpose in hand. In short, language learners need something very like what Krashen calls the Monitor (see e.g. Krashen 1981a, 1981b, 1982).[4]

With regard to the interaction between information about the target system and other input, this can be conceived of in at least two ways. On the one hand, such information can be seen as one of the keys with which the learner unlocks texts in the target language; on the other, it can be looked upon as a means by which the learner's consciousness is raised about particular features of the texts he or she confronts.

The first point can readily be related to the recent preoccupation with comprehensible input. This is not the place for a re-run of the discussion around Krashen's claim that "people acquire second languages when they obtain comprehensible input, and when their affective filters are low enough to allow the input 'in'" (Krashen 1981a, p.57). However, it is worth pointing out that in this discussion no one has disputed either the importance of input, in the sense of exposure to samples of the target language, or the necessity for such input to be at least minimally intelligible in order for it to have an impact on the learner's progress. To the extent, then, that information about the target system enables learners to understand textual input that would otherwise be beyond them, it plays a vital, if indirect, role in the development of the learner's competence.

We turn now to the question of such information making a more direct contribution, through consciousness-raising, to the learner's progress. The notion that consciousness-raising is helpful receives general support from studies on the effects of formal instruction; the balance of evidence suggests that contact with the target language plus formal instruction yields better results than contact alone (Long 1983). There is, admittedly, a wide range of theoretical perspectives on this issue (for reviews, see e.g. Littlewood 1984, pp.76ff.; Ellis 1985, pp.229ff.). At one end of the scale there is Krashen's view that consciously learned material has surrender value only "as an editor, as a

Monitor 'correcting' [...] what the performer perceives to be errors" (Krashen 1982, p.83). At the other end of the spectrum is what Ellis (1985, p.234) calls the "strong interface position", which permeates the work of McLaughlin (1978), Stevick (1980a, 1980b) and Sharwood Smith (1981) as well as some of the earlier writings of Bialystok (Bialystok and Fröhlich 1977; Bialystok 1979). This allows the possibility of continuous progression, through practice, from conscious to unconscious knowledge, from deliberate to automatic performance. Between Monitor Theory and the strong interface position lie a number of more nuanced accounts. Seliger, for example, takes a line which is close to Krashen's in not acknowledging a progression from consciously learned to unconsciously assimilated but differs from it in suggesting that activities consciously focussed on rules act as "acquisition facilitators" by concentrating the learner's attention on "critical attributes of the real language concept that must be induced" (Seliger 1979, p.368). Then there is the position more recently espoused by Bialystok (1982, 1984) and also adopted by Tarone (1983) and Ellis (1984), which, whilst not denying the possibility of a progression from analyticity to automaticity, proposes that the context of use in which a learner acquires linguistic knowledge strongly influences the subsequent deployment of that knowledge, so that the practice of analytic knowledge will not necessarily be reflected in increased proficiency of an unanalytic kind. If, however, there is no uniform view of the precise nature of the contribution of consciousness-raising to the learner's progress, there is nevertheless a consensus that it does, as even Krashen is at pains to admit, "have a role" (Krashen 1982, p.83). An interesting sidelight is thrown on this question by Odlin (1986), who draws together research findings from a number of sources which conspire to suggest strongly that the tapping of explicit knowledge to enhance communicative performance is a virtually universal phenomenon (see also Rutherford 1987, pp.24ff.).

If it is accepted that information about the target language can contribute to the acquisition process, the question arises: where is the learner to get such information from? One obvious answer is: the teacher. However, this leaves out of account the now widely prized educational principle that learners should be as autonomous as possible, i.e. should take as much responsibility as possible for their own learning. This principle self-evidently carries the corollary that the teacher should no longer pose as the sole channel of information, but should function as one information source among others. Abé and Gremmo put it this way:

> L'enseignant passe [...] du rôle de celui qui sait tout et qui renseigne sur tout à celui qui indique les endroits où on peut trouver l'information et qui montre comment on peut faire pour obtenir les renseignements

> recherchés [...]. Bien sûr, il renseigne sur la lexique ou la grammaire [...]. Mais il n'est plus l'informant unique, il devient un informant parmi d'autres. (Abé and Gremmo 1980, pp.109f.)

Clearly, this kind of development can only take place if other sources of information are actually available to the learner.

3 OTHER KINDS OF INFORMATION POTENTIALLY USEFUL TO LANGUAGE LEARNERS

So much for the value of information supplied by pedagogically oriented linguistic descriptions of a classical kind. We wish to examine now two further types of information that might be useful to the learner, the first deriving from recent work in pragmatics and sociolinguistics, and the second deriving from the study of second language acquisition and performance.

Obvious examples of areas covered by the former type of information would be the manner of realization of speech acts, the structuring and articulation of discourse, and aspects of language variation related to group-membership. To take each of these in turn, speech act theory has of course had a major impact on language teaching. Many recently produced language syllabuses and courses have taken selections of speech acts or "communicative functions" as organizing principles and have illustrated the realization of such acts in great detail (see e.g. van Ek 1975; Coste et al. 1976; Baldegger et al. 1980; Sprankling 1979; ITÉ 1983-5). The attraction of using a sociosemantic categorization as the point of departure for a syllabus or course is, to quote Wilkins, "that [sociosemantic categories] are closest to the very purposes for which language is used, namely the expression of meaning (used here to include such aspects as the promotion and maintenance of social relations)" (Wilkins 1981, pp.98f.). However, sociosemantic compilations subserving specific syllabuses or courses are *ipso facto* limited in range and therefore flexibility. More comprehensive systematizations existing, in Barkowski's words, "in relativer Unabhängigkeit von konkreten Inhalten" (Barkowski 1982, p.125), have much more to offer in terms of versatility. Obviously Leech and Svartvik's *Communicative Grammar of English* (1975) points the way in this regard.

As far as discourse structure is concerned, one might appropriately provide learners with information on differences between spoken and written discourse in the target language (see e.g. Brown and Yule 1983, pp.14-19), the functioning of reference (see e.g. Brown and Yule 1983, pp.190-222), and the overt signalling of argumentation (see e.g. Roulet et al. 1985, pp.126-44). In

fact, shadowy elements of this kind of information do appear here and there in traditional pedagogical grammars. For instance, in a basic grammar of Dutch first published in 1941 (Koolhoven 1961) we were able to discover allusions to differences between spoken and written discourse in respect of (among other things) interrogation (p.86) and the expression of possession (p.147), and brief explanations of the referring possibilities of personal pronouns (pp.24, 27 and 30). It is clear that thanks to recent research in pragmatics it would now be possible to present this sort of material much more completely, much more accurately, and perhaps more digestibly.

A third area we mentioned in the context of information derivable from pragmatics and sociolinguistics was that of group-membership-related language variation. We are thinking here of basic facts about different geographical and social varieties of the target language. In relation to English, one obvious quarry for material of this kind would be the work of Trudgill (see e.g. Trudgill 1974, 1978; Trudgill and Hannah 1985). Again, pedagogical grammars do occasionally make mention of dialectal factors, but what they have to say is usually sketchy in the extreme. For instance, in the introduction to a Swedish grammar-reader of a very traditional stamp (Hird et al. 1977), we came across the following:

> Standard spoken Swedish, based on the dialects spoken around Lake Mälar and strongly influenced by Stockholm speech is now gaining ground at the expense of the dialects. Within the cultured spoken language there are, however, acceptable regional variations in pronunciation and vocabulary, notably the speech of the southern provinces, once part of Denmark, which still shows affinities with Danish, and the Swedish of Finland, which since the secession from Sweden in 1809 has developed characteristics of its own. (Hird et al. 1977, pp.1f.)

Since nothing further is said about such "regional variations", the only effect this statement can have is to sow doubts in the learner's mind about the relationship between the forms contained in the grammar and the real Swedish-speaking world. Some genuine information, however schematic, would surely be preferable.

We envisage information of a pragmatic/sociolinguistic type as having a very similar role to that of more familiar types of information. In other words, we see it as a further aid to the comprehension of textual input and a further means of facilitating, through consciousness-raising, the learning of items which occur in such input. Information about what is involved in second language learning and performance would have a rather different purpose, namely to motivate the learner to adopt as efficient as possible a range of

general learning and performance strategies. Interplay between the two modes of information use is, however, very much part of our conception, as will become clear.

The usual objection to providing learners with information about the learning and performance processes is that our state of knowledge in these matters is highly deficient. But after centuries of language teaching and in the midst of a veritable explosion of second language acquisition research, this is simply not true. Stern, for example, derives from his review of learning research four basic sets of optimal strategies. These revolve around the planning of learning, the conscious apprehension of form-meaning relationships, involvement in authentic language use, and a positive frame of mind (Stern 1983, pp.411f.). They bear comparison with the characteristics of "the good language learner" arrived at by Naiman et al. (1978). At another level, the authors and editors of various guides to language learning (e.g. Glendening 1965, Larson and Smalley 1972, Healey 1975, Brewster 1976, Pimsleur 1980, Rubin and Thompson 1982)[3] and of "language awareness" materials designed for pupils about to enter foreign language programmes (e.g. Aplin et al. 1981, Dunlea 1985) do not draw back from making general statements about "learning another language" or indeed from spelling out "the golden rules" of foreign language learning. What these language learning guides and language awareness textbooks relate concerning second language acquisition again corresponds quite closely to the broad lines of Stern's conclusions. And this is no mere coincidence, for what Stern has to say is vouched for not only by research findings but also by teachers' intuitions and indeed ordinary common sense.

As an example of a second language learning phenomenon about which some information might prove helpful to the learner, let us take the case of cross-linguistic influence. Recent research suggests that at least where learners perceive a degree of relatedness between their target language and any other language(s) they know, such influence is bound to become manifest to some extent (cf. Kellerman 1977, 1979, 1983), not just as performance "borrowing" (cf. Corder 1983), but also as an interactant with natural developmental processes (cf., e.g., Wode 1978, Zobl 1980a, 1980b, Andersen 1983). To help learners cope with cross-linguistic influence we could do worse than treat it explicitly as a fact of life in second language learning and performing and provide them with information about its operation. This approach might suggest a further dimension to the other information component, namely a comparison of mother tongue and target language features. Support for this kind of addition comes from personal construct psychology (see e.g. Riley 1980) and from the success of some preliminary experimentation in sensitizing learners to mother-tongue/target-language similarities and differences car-

ried out in France and Switzerland (see e.g. Dabène and Bourgignon 1979; Roulet 1980).

Thus we begin to see how information about process can interact with other types of information. If one were to extend the comparative dimension to include "cross-pragmatic" and intercultural considerations - now a major research preoccupation (see e.g. Riley 1981; Benedava 1983; Olshtain and Blum-Kulka 1983; Thomas 1983; Markkanen 1985) - this could very easily interact with information about the role of attitude in second language acquisition as well as with information about the role of conscious focussing on form-meaning relationships. More generally, the latter would clearly interact with the whole range of information about the target language, as would information about the role of planning. In addition, the totality of information about acquisition and performance processes could be expected to influence the learner's approach to the textual input and in that sense to interact with that input.

4 HELPING INPUT TO BECOME INTAKE: TEXT EXPLOITATION "RECIPES"

One area not so far mentioned in relation to information about the second language acquisition process is that of memory. Actually, the findings of memory research are not referred to as often as one might expect by writers on second language acquisition. This is all the more strange because such research would seem to be highly relevant to one of the central issues in second language acquisition studies, namely the relation between *input* and *intake*.

Granted that there are almost certainly natural developmental processes generating natural sequences in the acquisition of morphosyntax (for reviews of research on natural sequences, see e.g. Littlewood 1984, pp.36-50; Ellis 1985, pp.42-74), no one, not even Krashen (*pace* Allwright 1984), believes that mere exposure to appropriate input will necessarily cause such developmental mechanisms to function. (What Krashen says is that in order for this to take place, exposure must be such as to "involve the learner directly" (1981b, p.47).) Moreover, it is evident that the existence of a natural sequence of major milestones does not preclude a high degree of variability between these points, and that there is no fixed rate at which stages are reached. Furthermore, there is no suggestion that the whole second language acquisition process is characterized by stable sequences. Such a suggestion would be extremely difficult to sustain in relation to, for example, vocabulary acquisition or the socio-pragmatic domain. Thus, a rigidly deterministic perspective on intake is

completely unjustified. Accordingly, if evidence is available to show that retention of input is maximized by operating on that input in particular kinds of ways, then those of us who are interested in increasing the efficiency of second language learning ought surely to be taking it into account.

A summary of verbal memory research would have to include at least the following points:

1. It is fairly clear that rote-learning linguistic forms is less effective than performing meaningful tasks on such forms. Studies show that subjects who try to rote-learn linguistic material do not remember this material as well as subjects who are "induced to attend to the meanings of the memory material" (Wingfield and Byrnes 1981, p.99) and that verbatim recall of verbal material is more likely in relation to "statements with personal significance for the participants" (Ellis and Beattie 1986, p.251).

2. There is evidence that performing meaningful tasks involves a greater "depth" of processing (see e.g. Wingfield and Byrnes 1981, Chapter 8), and that verbal input is made more memorable precisely by "'deep processing' in which a variety of relations are established between the newly learned and the pre-existing knowledge" (Gagné 1977, p.197).

3. It also appears that recall is enhanced by the encoding of distinctive cues (see e.g. Gagné 1977, pp.197ff.; Wingfield and Byrnes 1981, 294ff. and 326f.), and indeed that the very basis for the "increased ability to recall information after deep or more elaborate processing may be the increased distinctiveness of the resulting code" (Wingfield and Byrnes 1981, p.294).

4. Although some studies indicate that mere "repetition of labels or facts, in a kind of 'overt rehearsal', does not necessarily lead to better encoding or retention" (Gagné 1977, p.199), others suggest that a "longer opportunity for rehearsal" does "improve memory for items not tested in immediate recall" (Wingfield and Byrnes 1981, p.290). The widely drawn inference is that "more extensive processing [...] may increase the durability of a memory code" (Wingfield and Byrnes 1981, p.290), particular emphasis being placed in some quarters on practice involving retrieval or review, which "can provide the occasion for additional and more elaborate encoding" and "increase the variety of retrieval cues" (Gagné 1977, p.199).

The implication for activities aimed at maximizing intake from second

language texts is that such activities should induce the learner to attend to meaning and engage his or her interest; that they should facilitate the integration of new material into broader frameworks of old knowledge; that they should bring out the distinctiveness of the new material; and that they should entail practice or review of new material. Approaches to text exploitation which incorporate these principles in varying degrees have been advocated in recent years by applied linguists and didacticians involved in the "communicative" movement. Littlewood, for example, suggests (1981, pp.67ff.) that the active nature of second language listening comprehension be given full weight by requiring learners to perform physical tasks related to specific meanings in the text, to transpose textually mediated meanings into other forms (charts, diagrams, etc.), to reformulate such meanings in their own words, and to evaluate them through written argument or group discussion. In a similar vein, Corless and Gaskell (1983, pp.83ff.) propose that texts of all kinds be exploited in three broad phases: a discovery phase during which the learner (alone or with others) unravels the meanings of the text; a practice phase during which the new is related to the already familiar, categories and principles are extended and clarified, and contextual applications are broached; and a performance phase during which new material is combined with previously acquired material in the production of "something considered and coherent" (p.90). Devitt (1986) envisages an interaction between learner and text which begins with exercises to supplement or help organize the learner's existing knowledge about the text topic, continues with exercises to foster interest in the text content and exercises to facilitate comprehension of particular elements in the text, and ends with exercises to stimulate a personal response to the text from the learner.

There is, then, no shortage of ideas about how text exploitation should proceed in order to optimize learners' chances of retaining new material. Nor do these ideas remain at an abstract level; concrete implementations abound, both illustratively in works such as those we have just cited and more extensively in actual courses. Accordingly, any teacher who had the opportunity to work through the relevant literature and who was able to devote unlimited time to class preparation would have no difficulty in producing a set of exercises for any "raw" text he or she wanted to treat. The problem is that teachers do not have unlimited time (or energy) at their disposal. In consequence, the reality is that most of them are faced with a hard choice: either they stick rigidly to texts that have already been "didacticized" by course writers or materials producers, or else they resign themselves to exploiting the texts they have selected in ways which are not as helpful as they might be.

So much for the teacher; what about the learner? An interesting idea to

emerge from recent discussions of learner autonomy (cf. Little 1985) is that learners should be expected to go beyond the completion of ready-made exercises and to work on oral and written texts in such a way as to "didacticize" them for use by others. In this way learners might be brought to a clearer and more critical understanding of the processes that different exercise types are designed to model. Obviously, such a development could lead to the evolution of various forms of collaboration which would be relatively teacher-independent. Indeed, there seems no reason why learners should not devise text-exploitation activities for their own use in accordance with their preferred learning methods (much the same approach could profitably be adopted to encouraging learners to "make friends with" their interlanguage). However, if learners are to be encouraged in this direction they will undoubtedly need more guidance than is currently available.

What we propose is that teachers and learners have available to them a kind of do-it-yourself text exploitation kit, with detailed step-by-step "recipes" for didacticizing authentic texts. Actually, the analogy of the recipe only half works, since what we are talking about are sets of procedures which can be applied to various "ingredients". For example, a brief series of exercises for preparing learners to confront virtually any narrative text - from a news report to one of Aesop's fables - can be derived from the text using the following "recipe":

1. The teacher isolates the key noun phrases in the text and jumbles them.
2. The learner arranges the noun phrases phrases into clusters according to meaning.
3. The teacher isolates the key verbs in the text and jumbles them.
4. The learner adds the verbs to the clusters already formed.
5. Using the word clusters arrived at, the learner tries to create a scenario and a story.

(Adapted from Devitt 1986)

Similar "recipes" can readily be devised for other kinds of text.

5 CONCLUSION

In our consideration of what needs to be available to the second language learner apart from textual input, we have arrived at two basic components: an information bank and a text-exploitation kit. The former can be subdivided into information about the target language and information about acquiring and performing in a second language, and the latter is envisaged as a source of detailed, practical suggestions about text-processing.

The final question that needs to be addressed is how all of this is to be packaged. The fact that we have referred throughout to "books" and "documents" should not be taken to imply that we see no role for the computer in this dimension of language learning. On the contrary, we are enthusiastic about the possibilities of computer-driven learning resources if harnessed to the kind of approaches outlined in this paper (see e.g. Little 1986). However, it must be acknowledged that for the moment the book has the edge over the computer in terms of cost, portability and general flexibility (cf. Jones 1984), and for these reasons we see our learner's manual as being first issued and mostly used in book form.

We plan to divide our manual into three sections. The first section will be non-language-specific; it will deal with learning in general and language learning in particular, and will offer learners a number of strategies calculated to promote more effective learning. The second section will be language-specific and will contain reference material relating to the language system in question and the principal socio-cultural contexts in which the language is used. The third section will again be language-specific but will be constructed around a battery of text-exploitation recipes designed to mediate between the first and second sections of the manual and the authentic texts that are our learners' principal input materials.

Our proposed manual differs from the language learning guides referred to above (p.15) in two decisive respects. First, it will combine language-specific and non-language-specific material in a way that (as far as we are aware) has not been attempted before; and secondly, it will be produced in a form that encourages learners to think of it as something to which they themselves can contribute throughout the learning process.

NOTES

1 This paper incorporates parts of papers given at the BAAL conference "Learning grammar as an instrument of communication in a foreign language", University of Bath, July 1985, and at a postgraduate seminar in the Department of Linguistics, University of Lancaster, May 1986. We are grateful to Andrew Cohen, Chris Brumfit, Dick Allwright and Seán Devitt for helpful comments on these earlier papers and to Seán Devitt for helpful comments on the present paper.

2 In a comprehensive sense, *second* referring to any language being learned other than the mother tongue and *language learners, language learning*, etc. not being distinguished from *language acquirer, language acquisition*, etc.

3 For the purposes of this paper we leave aside the question of literary studies. For some ideas on the possibilities for integrating the study of literary texts into communicative language teaching, see e.g. Widdowson (1975), Corless (1978), Brumfit (1982).

4 This is not to imply that we accept "Monitor Theory" in all its detail and ramifications. The notion that language use is often characterized by planning and editing of a conscious kind is virtually universally accepted and indeed is taken as axiomatic by those researchers who reject Krashen's claims about how the Monitor relates to other aspects of language use (see e.g. Stern 1983; Brumfit 1984; Ellis 1985).

5 Some of these guides remain at an extremely general level; others, on the contrary, make assumptions about the context and mode of learning which will only apply in a minority of cases; most fail to give full value to insights and techniques that have emerged from the recent "communicative" teaching/learning experience. For a review of those mentioned, see Toney 1983.

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